



## Examples of Questions for the Assessment Process

### ***Natural resources***

- What are the primary natural resources of the area?
- What are the environmental problems (now or potentially)?
- What ecosystems does your MPA contain?

### ***What are the individual and ecosystem attractions?***

- Are there “charismatic” species that will attract visitors?
  - Have inventories of species been conducted? What do they include?
  - Are there endangered or threatened species or communities of plants/animals? Where are they located?
- What are the scenic attractions of the protected area?
  - Where are the most pristine sectors of the protected area?
- Are some of the attractions seasonal?
  - Are some species or ecosystems seasonally vulnerable?

### ***Cultural variables***

- Are there any significant historical or archeological sites in or near the MPA?
  - Are they vulnerable to destruction or damage?
  - Do other institutions need to be involved in order to excavate, restore, protect and interpret these sites?
- Are there local indigenous or traditional cultures that need to be respected in the development of sustainable tourism at these sites?
  - Can they be participants and beneficiaries?

### ***Political and economic climate***

- Is the MPA protected?
  - Why is it considered important to protect? Is it effectively protected? If not, what elements are missing to effectively protect it?
- Who manages the area? Is it part of a protected system? If so, describe the system and its management. Is the management system effective?
  - How many staff members does the protected area employ?
    - Describe their functions.
    - Do they work full or part-time?
    - Are they local or do they live outside the area?
    - Do volunteers work in the protected area?
    - If so, what do they do?
    - Is the current level of employees adequate to cover current and projected management responsibilities?



- What are the primary threats to the protected area? These may be economic development pressures such as tourism or others.
  - Which resources are affected by these threats?
  - How urgent and severe are these threats?
  - What strategies are used to deal with the identified threats?
- Describe the current impacts of tourists (improved economy, strained infrastructure)? Have any attempts been made to quantify impacts?
- Is there an environmental monitoring system in the protected area? If so, describe it. Is it effective? If not, why not?

**Visitor profiles**

- Who do you *want* to attract?
  - Who *can* you attract? Where do they live?
  - How easily can they travel to this area? What are their goals?
- Are there visitor statistics for the protected area? Who collects them?
  - What languages do they speak and read?
  - What are the trends?
- Do people travel independently or with guides? If guides are used, are they protected area employees, local or outside guides?
- Do the visitors go to local communities in conjunction with their visit to the protected area? What are the communities' assessments of such visits?
- What type of tourism infrastructure does the protected area have? Are there trail systems? Anchorage? Fueling stations and waste systems?
- What are the protected area's environmental education programs? Is there a visitor center? Materials? Is education valued?

**Tourism Plans and Policies**

- Are there local management plans, tourism plans, zoning ordinances?
- Are nature tourism or ecotourism part of the plans? Are there national conservation or economic development plans?
- What government guidelines, laws or policies affect tourism in your area?
- What opportunities are there for you to play a role in planning and policymaking at local, regional or national levels?
- Are you satisfied with existing plans and policies related to nature tourism/ecotourism?
  - Is there an entrance fee system? Is it effective? What happens to the money collected from entrance fees and other fees?
  - Are there policies concerning private sector activities in the protected area? If not, should there be? How would you change current plans and policies? Would you add new ones?



- Is there pending or upcoming legislation related to your protected area?
  - Is there a chance for you to get involved in this process?
  - Would this be a good opportunity to help shape the direction of ecotourism in the area?

***Local communities***

- What is the situation of communities next to or inside the protected area?
  - What is the basis of the local economy?
  - How are they organized, educated?
  - What are their values, leadership? Are there other significant characteristics of each group?
- What is the history of relations between local communities and the protected area and the plants and animals in it?
  - Are there relationships that need to change?
  - Will advocating changes conflict with tradition?
- Do local residents visit your protected area? Why? Have they encountered difficulties gaining access to the site due to increased visitation?
- Are residents involved in nature tourism activities?
- What are the employment opportunities for local residents?
  - How many residents own or manage businesses?
  - Are tourism businesses in the area profitable? For locals or for external tour operators? Are products local or imported?
- How do local communities feel like they have been impacted by tourism so far?
  - Do you know whether residents wish to pursue or discourage tourism in their communities?
  - How can you create a system for communication with local communities?

***Partnerships***

- Do you have any active partnerships with local residents?
- Government agencies or officials?
- Tourism officials, the industry, or operators?
- With academics?
- Non-governmental organizations?
- With educators or teachers (community-based, regional, national)?
- For each relationship, who initiated it and why?
  - Is it working for all the partners?



- Is there a dynamic exchange of information so adaptations can be made as conditions change?
- Which are successful? Why? Are there any that have not worked? Why not?

***Marketing and Promotion***

- Is your protected area well known locally? Regionally? Internationally?
- Is your protected area promoted as part of a national or regional tourism campaign?
- Are NGOs active at your site?
- How does the tourism industry market your site?
- What are your formal means of promotion (brochures, videos or a web sites)?
- Is there also informal promotion (past visitors)? Are there other ways to promote your protected area?

***Opportunities and Obstacles***

- What will change tourism demand (such as upgrading infrastructure, promoting healthy local communities)
- What has happened recently that may affect tourism, on the one hand, and the protected areas, on the other? Are the threats greater? Has there been a change in the protective status of the area? Has funding increased?
- What about publicity? Local, regional, or external?
- Are there already tourists in the region visiting other sites who might be attracted to your site?
- Are there upcoming conferences in your country related to nature tourism?
- Are there political obstacles to tourism growth to consider?
  - Is there potential for conflict or is your area relatively stable?
- Have you experienced a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, in your area? What was damaged?
- How stable is your country's currency?

(Source: Drumm, Andy and Moore, Alan. 2005. *An Introduction to Ecosystem Planning*, Second Edition. The Nature Conservancy, Arlington, Virginia, USA.)